Health Care Reform

I've heard from a lot of people concerned about the President’s plan to reform health care- especially H.R. 3200 proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives. After numerous town halls and individual meetings throughout Tennessee I have personally heard your ideas for health reform and your concerns over reform that makes government health care the solution.

Saying NO to Government-Run Health Care

In its current form, I oppose the Democratic Leadership’s health care reform plan. CLICK HERE to see the text of H.R. 3200. As a physician who helped patients for over 30 years, I am deeply concerned about some of the changes being proposed in this legislation. From reading the 1,017 pages of the House bill, H.R. 3200, a clear byproduct of the legislation will be an expansive new bureaucracy put directly between patients and their doctors. This $1.5 trillion legislation threatens a government takeover of health care that will lead to fewer jobs, increased deficits, higher taxes and less health coverage for Tennessee.

Learn from TennCare

We witnessed the ramifications of a similar program in Tennessee called TennCare, which was created in 1994 as a way to expand coverage and was designed like this federal legislation. The results of TennCare were dramatic cost increases that led the state to cut health care because the program was financially unsustainable. When you look at the budget projections for the President’s health care bill, it too will lead to dramatic cost increases that will cause unsustainable spending that will either force rationing of care or significant tax increases.

H.R. 3400, The Empowering Patients First Act

As an alternative, I am a sponsor and supporter of H.R. 3400, the Empowering Patients First Act. CLICK HERE to see the text of H.R. 3400. H.R. 3400 is built upon the principle that when individuals are given control and ownership, we will achieve better access to coverage and see the entire system move in a positive, patient-centered direction.

Common Sense Approaches to Health Care Reform

When I first started thinking about running for Congress two and a half years ago, I was energized by the opportunity to go to Washington and work to reform health care. Most people I’ve seen over the years as a physician like the quality of the care they receive, but they don’t like the cost. They want the care they need at an affordable price without unnecessary interference from insurance companies or government bureaucrats. Early on in the year, I laid out a series of principles I would use to evaluate any health care reform proposals this Congress considered.

Principles

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Preventing government-run health care.

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Preventing the destruction of a system that works for 80 percent of Americans to extend coverage to the remaining Americans.

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Ensuring that doctors and patients are in charge of making medically-necessary decisions.

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Making quality health insurance more affordable to achieve universal access.

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Protecting against catastrophic costs.

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Giving patients more ownership to improve portability.

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Making sure everyone has “skin in the game.”

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Eliminating the insurance industry’s ability to profit by avoiding the sick.

The proposal before us today falls short of meeting these principles. Additionally, at a time of record unemployment and mounting debts and deficits, this proposal sets the stage for more job losses by requiring small businesses and entrepreneurs to foot the entire bill for this health care expansion. A basic economic principle says that if you increase employers’ costs up to 8 percent, as this bill would do, employers will cut costs by cutting jobs and salaries.

Today’s bill and its so-called “public insurance option” is an exercise in subterfuge. The misnomer given to this government-run health care plan has been word-smithed and poll tested to mislead people into thinking they have a choice between government-run health care and the health care they receive today. But the bill sets up a process in which ONLY the government plan can survive. Unbiased studies all indicate many employees who have coverage today through their employer will lose it if this bill is passed.

The Lewin Group – respected in Washington as a completely independent analysis group – estimated that 106 million employees would lose employer-sponsored coverage under this bill. This bill undermines the President’s promise to allow you to keep coverage you like. What you won’t hear about from the other side of the aisle is how the exact same program being advanced today failed here in Tennessee 15 years ago when we tried to achieve universal coverage.

Initial cost estimates for our TennCare program were unbelievably low, as for 10 years we watched our Medicaid program’s cost go from unsustainable to crippling the state budget. Skyrocketing costs forced our Democratic governor to cut the rolls and fix the program. This bill learns none of the lessons from TennCare’s mistakes.

Seeking Common Ground on Health Care Reform

 - To view my statements on the House of Representatives floor and interviews I've done regarding health care, please CLICK HERE.

 - To read my columns on health care, please CLICK HERE.

Health care reform is at the forefront of my mind and I am committed to helping this Congress implement true health care reform. I will continue to fight for the values of you and your family in the First District of Tennessee.

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